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Director of Central Intelligence

~~Top Secret~~

[redacted] 3.5(c)

National Intelligence Daily (Cable)

8 November 1982

[redacted] 3.5(c)

~~Top Secret~~

CPAS NIDC 82-261C

8 November 1982

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ARGENTINA: Regime Under Pressure

As the Democratic transition unfolds, President Bignone is caught in a squeeze between increasingly aggressive civilian groups and a military institution concerned that it will be called to account. 3.5(c)

Human rights groups last month successfully challenged a government ban by staging a large demonstration to demand an accounting of persons who disappeared in the mid-1970s campaign against alleged subversives. These demands have been strengthened by the recent discovery of unmarked mass graves in Buenos Aires that contain the bodies of at least some dissidents whom the government claims were killed in clashes with the police during the period. 3.5(c)

The press also has exposed financial corruption touching many top military leaders. In addition, labor groups--anticipating new economic policies following recent IMF negotiations--have threatened to strike later this month if growth-oriented programs are abandoned. 3.5(c)

The junta of military service chiefs now is widely believed to be exercising tighter control over Bignone. It has responded to the media attacks by closing three periodicals. 3.5(c)

//Army commander Nicolaides, who used recent command changes to solidify his support, is in a better position to protect military interests and, if necessary, dictate to Bignone.

3.3(b)(1)

Comment: The series of scandals and demands has undermined Bignone's efforts to win civilian support. At the same time, the military continues to back him for lack of an attractive alternative. 3.5(c)

Bignone still appears to have some time, but he will have to reassert himself and begin to reconcile the increasingly antagonistic civilian and military interests. If Bignone fails, coherent policymaking will become impossible, and neither group would have much further use for him. 3.5(c)

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